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ABSTRACT

The revival of Hebrew as a modern spoken language in the early part of this century is discussed. The usage of spoken Hebrew in the Middle Ages and its evolution within and outside the Middle East are described. The interpretation of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda's late nineteenth century interest in reviving spoken Hebrew as a call for general spoken Hebrew usage and the largely negative response made by Hebrew literary scholars and others are also outlined. Two previous distinct periods of Hebrew revitalization are described in the context of political, religious, social, and literary trends and events. A review of research on the most recent period of change focuses on linguistic borrowing and invention and its institutionalization in The Language Committee and later the Academy for the Hebrew Language in Jerusalem. The report recounts the terminology work undertaken at the Academy and the use of Hebrew and external grammatical mechanisms to develop Hebrew vocabulary for modern usage. (MSE)

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Terminology Development in the Revival of a Language

The Case of Contemporary Hebrew

Chaim Rabin

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short title: Terminology in Contemporary Hebrew

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The Historical Background

Words meaning 'revival' or 'rebirth' ('renaissance') are often used to characterize processes of broadening the use of a language, whether this is by increasing the percentage of users of that language within a community historically associated with it, as in the case of the Irish Revival, or by introducing it into new fields of use within its community, whether these uses were previously reserved for another language (e.g. in diglossia, or by employing a majority language within the political structure) or such uses had previously been non-existent among the users of that language, as is the case in societies acquiring for the first time the use of writing, or of written literature of a prestigious type. The last-named type of "revival" was typical for the rise of new nations in Europe in the nineteenth century. The term revival is attested for the development of Yiddish artistic, Western-style literature, and was employed in the first article, published in 1879, by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1857-1922), regarded as the originator of the "Revival of Hebrew," with reference to the Hebrew writings of his Jewish contemporaries in Eastern Europe.[1] At that time, Hebrew was in most Jewish communities only written, while the spoken activities were in the language of the country where that particular community lived as a minority, or in a Jewish language developed at some remote point in history out of that majority language, or completely different from the majority language, because it was

carried by Jewish emigrants from the country where that Jewish language had developed.

Just as other "high languages" in diglossia situations were occasionally spoken in contexts where the "low language" could not be used (for instance, with strangers using the same "high" language, but not the same colloquial medium) or by certain privileged social groups in formal circumstances, so Hebrew was used in the Middle Ages when Jews from different countries met, or when Jews wished to converse in the presence of non-Jews and not be understood. This is a natural consequence of the fact that command of a language as written form of expression can, by an act of will, be applied also in speech (without acquiring thereby the registers of spoken language). In the case of Hebrew, such occasional spoken use had been intensified in the two generations preceding the revival of spoken Hebrew in the bigger cities in Palestine with large Jewish populations, where communities from many countries had settled in separate quarters. Each of them guarded their own Jewish language and traditional pronunciation of Hebrew for sacred purposes, but they bought and sold in markets frequented by all communities, and there, not having any other language in common, they spoke Hebrew in the pronunciation of Oriental Jews (cf. Parfitt 1972). This being a purely utilitarian lingua franca, we have no written records to show what it was like. It is therefore impossible to know whether any of it was absorbed into the Hebrew spoken after the revival,

especially as the groups involved in it rejected the political implications of that revival: The Eastern European (Ashkenazi) part of this pre-Zionist population ("the Old Yishuv") still insist on using their former languages at home and in the community. The Oriental (Sephardic) part, while maintaining their former languages to some extent, speak Hebrew in a form basically identical with that of the Zionist population.

The idea of speaking Hebrew seems to have come to E. Ben-Yehuda about six months after he had composed his article - though before it was printed. In the article itself, spoken use of the language is merely mentioned as a possibility, "if we want to do so." It is possible that the contacts Ben-Yehuda had with exiled intellectuals from several new nations fighting for recognition convinced him of the role the spoken language played in the process of "national rebirth." As soon as his article appeared, it seems to have been interpreted by Jews in the Czarist Empire as a call for speaking Hebrew. Although most of the established Hebrew literary figures expressed their disagreement with this idea, as well as with the call for setting up a large settlement of a modern, secular character in Palestine, which is, in fact, the main message of his first article, societies for speaking Hebrew began to spring up in various parts of Eastern Europe. This was no doubt connected with the marked deterioration of the Jewish situation in Czarist Russia, which shattered the hopes of obtaining full citizen's

status, and gave rise to mass emigration, mainly to America, on the one hand, and to Palestine, on the other. Ben-Yehuda, who had meanwhile moved to Jerusalem and started working towards the introduction of Hebrew as language of instruction in the more modern schools, called upon the young emigrants from Russia to speak Hebrew. They responded by establishing all-Hebrew schools in the villages they founded, and thus widening the circle of "native Hebrew speakers," the first of whom, in splendid isolation, had been Ben-Yehuda's first-born son.

I have not found out when the term revival was first applied to the process of extending the use of Hebrew to everyday speech. Hebrew is, as far as I know, the only case where the "high" variety of a diglossic language was expanded to replace the "low" variety, or in this case the multiplicity of "low" languages. It was in all probability this multiplicity which assured the success of spoken Hebrew in Palestine. There are other cases where "high" languages in a more or less diglossic situation also became spoken registers. This happened with Hochdeutsch, literary German, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and seems to be happening with literary Arabic in our own time. However, as the "lower" language forms, though widely differing among each other, are closely related to the "high" language, and are considered by the community as being "the same language," it would be more correct to speak in these two cases of a process of standardization rather than revival. The Jewish languages, by

contrast, are all unrelated or only distantly related to Hebrew, so that there is a real replacement.

This is the historical and social background to the adaptation of Hebrew to the needs of an advanced Western-type society. Hebrew in Israel now serves as the language of a sophisticated society, in a modern, often hyper-modern literature, in politics, newspaper, university teaching and research,and all the forms of expression customary in Western societies. The adaptation did not come as part of the westernization of a traditional society, since the driving force were Jewish immigrants already westernized, first from Eastern Europe, and afterwards also from central and western countries of Europe and from North America, who were willing, for ideological reasons, to adopt the Hebrew language, but required it to express their technical, intellectual and literary needs, evolved in the use of the more developed European languages. The Jews from less developed countries were only drawn into this Western civilization gradually, and acquired the more sophisticated resources of the Hebrew language as part of their own westernization. In this, as far as I am aware, Hebrew also stands more or less alone among the languages discussed in this book.

Three Modernizations

Hebrew did not undergo a process of modernization for the first time in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It had done

so at least twice in its long history. Once it happened during the period of the Second Temple and the Hellenization of the Middle East, that is, roughly between 300 B.C. and 200 A.D., just before Hebrew ceased to be spoken.In this period it enlarged its vocabulary to deal with new tools, institutions and ideas introduced by Hellenistic Greek and Latin, the latter through the medium of Graecicized Latin words, and words created in Greek for Roman institutions and concepts. This was done by borrowing hundreds of Graeco-Roman words[2], as well as by adapting the meanings of existent words and by forming new words. In this process, Hebrew was not alone: Similar developments took place in Aramaic and Coptic, and some centuries later in Arabic, where the innovations were imported mainly through the medium of Aramaic, and again in the eighth and ninth centuries via Syriac, one of the Aramaic languages, when Syriac scholars translated into Arabic Greek works of philosophy, natural sciences and medicine, using extant or specially prepared Greek-Syriac translations as intermediate stages. In Hebrew, the absorption of the new material was made easier by the contemporary abandonment of late Biblical Hebrew as written standard and its replacement by Mishnaic Hebrew, a standardized form of the spoken language. It is possible that also the main innovation of Mishnaic Hebrew in the verb, the creation of a present tense based on the participle, where Biblical Hebrew had only two tenses, past and future, which shared the present between them, is due to the

influence of Greek. The same development of the verb took place in Aramaic.

It is possible that a similar replacement of a classical form by a semi-colloquial one for modern subjects facilitated the penetration of loanwords and the formation of new Arabic words. The Syrian translators did not employ Classical Arabic, based upon the language of pre-Islamic poetry, controlled by grammarians and orthoepists, but "Middle Arabic," the form used by Christians and Jews, who were not admitted to the religious Muslim schools where the Classical language was taught. Middle Arabic, close to the colloquial language and without guidance by grammarians, easily absorbed new words and direct loans of Greek words.

The ideology of the Arab Classical language, however, as sole vehicle of poetry and artistic prose, influenced from the ninth century onward the Jews, first in the East and later in Muslim Spain, to use their own ancient and grammarian-controlled language form, Biblical Hebrew, as vehicle for poetry and artistic prose. This, in principle, should have left Mishnaic Hebrew (which by then had absorbed also many Biblical words) in possession as language for non-artistic prose, but the idea that Mishnaic Hebrew had in its time as a spoken language been the colloquial of the common people, or, as it was phrased, "the language of the ancients," looked too much like employing a

colloquial for writing, a thing which by Arabic standards was out of the question. Biblical Hebrew could not be used, because by definition new words could not be introduced into a Classical language, and in comparison to the extremely rich vocabulary of Classical Arabic, Biblical Hebrew with its total salvaged vocabulary of about 7000 words was too poor to serve as a language for what was then modern scientific discourse. The "insufficiency" of Hebrew is often mentioned by theorists as the reason why they had to use middle Arabic, in Hebrew characters, to write scientific prose. In Christian Europe, on the other hand, where medieval Latin was constantly being enriched with new words, and vernacular languages had started to be written, the enriched Mishnaic Hebrew continued to be written by Jews for all contemporary purposes.

The year 1135 saw the first mass expulsion of Jews from Muslim Spain. Many scholars went to the South of France and to Northern Italy, and there some of them began to translate scientific Arabic writings by Jewish and Muslim authors into Hebrew for the local Jews. For this they used the enriched Mishnaic Hebrew, and dealt with the need of technical terminology by forming calque derivations of the Arabic words (which, as stated above, largely were calques of Greek words), and to a small extent by borrowing Arabic words, including loanwords from Greek (cf. Sarfatti 1968). The Hebrew language was extended by many hundreds of new words, as well as by grammatical

constructions rendering Arabic ways of expression. The mixed language proved itself effective and viable, absorbing in the succeeding centuries concepts from European languages by calque formations, and also increasingly Aramaic words from the legal language of the Talmud.

In the eighteenth century, apparently under the influence of Western European Classicism, Biblical Hebrew was taken up again as language not only for poetry but also for modernist prose expressing European thought and literary genres. This so-called Haskala (Enlightenment) literature was cultivated and read by a small part of the Central and Eastern European Jewish population, while the vast majority continued to read the mixed Hebrew, and even developed it into new literary styles. This was the situation at the time when Ben-Yehuda published that first article in 1879.

Since at that time the use of Biblical Hebrew was identified in public life with modernism and progress, and in principle no new words could be formed, but new concepts and objects could only be named by clumsy genitive constructions or by Biblical allusions containing several words, the revival of Hebrew speaking might well have been short-lived. However, soon after Ben-Yehuda's first article, we see Mishnaic words in otherwise Biblicizing texts of discursive character, for instance, in political articles in the press. The decisive innovation came in

literature, through the rise of Realism. The novelist and short-story writer S. J. Rabinovich, better known under his pen-name Mendele Mokher Sefarim (Mendele the itinerant book hawker), had in 1863 stopped the publication of his own contemporary novel "Fathers and Sons," written in Biblical Hebrew, and gone over to writing Yiddish, the language spoken by his characters in real life. In 1885, after writing in Yiddish for twenty-two years, he began to publish another novel in Hebrew, but this time in the mixed Hebrew of the majority of his readers.3 It is significant that this innovation was taken up by almost all his contemporaries, and that by 1890 it also penetrated into poetry. Already in the early eighties, the majority of the new Hebrew speakers actually used this mixed language in speech. The new literary idiom had no barriers against new formations or foreign words. Especially it was completely open for the absorption of Aramaic words. Thus, for reasons not directly connected with the spoken revival (which Mendele Mokher Sefarim opposed until the end of his life), Hebrew entered its period of total use in a shape which allowed for adaptation to the needs of the modern age.

Professor Uzzi Ornan, of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has prepared a dictionary of words added to the language between 1880 and 1920, comprising some thousands of words, both loans from European languages, Arabic and Turkish, and newly formed words from Hebrew elements. Ben-Yehuda himself invented hundreds

of new Hebrew words, which he used in his newspapers, and there were some fertile word-creators in the circle surrounding him, including his eldest son. Word invention came to be a kind of national sport, and was practiced by writers of Modern Hebrew literature, both in Palestine and in the Western part of the Jewish diaspora. The innovations of the better-known authors, whether nonce-words or accepted by other authors or the general public, were assiduously recorded by the dictionary makers, and in larger dictionaries, such as the one by Even-Shoshan (1966-83), are given with reference to their first appearance.

From The Language Committee to the Academy for the Hebrew Language

As early as 1890, a body was set up to control and further the vocabulary enlargement. Named "The Language Committee," it was composed of Ben-Yehuda and some teachers and natural scientists living in Jerusalem. The committee ceased to function after six months, and the minutes we know to have been taken have disappeared. Fifteen years later, the committee, under the same name, was revived as an enterprise of the Teachers' Union, who were worried that teachers in different places invented terminology for their subjects without contact with other schools, and pupils passing from one locality to another had difficulties in understanding the lessons. The first achievement of the new body was a dictionary of elementary mathematics. The method of dealing with word creation systematically for a subject

at a time was continued, and is still the rule at present. Actually, most of the lists contain only a limited percentage of newly formed words (which are also not marked as such). Many of the words given which do not belong to the older stages of the language, were created outside the Language Committee at various times, and their listing merely serves the function of official approval. Other words are taken from older periods of Hebrew, sometimes by changing their meaning. The saying of an early member of the committee, the poet Ch. N. Bialik, is often quoted, that "the best innovation is one that is not an innovation," that is, a word from ancient texts, Hebrew or Aramaic. In 1953, the Language Committee was renamed "Academy for the Hebrew Language" (Aqademiyah la-lashon ha-civrit) and became an official body, whose decisions become law after they are countersigned by the Minister of Education and published in the Official Gazette Reshumot. The vocabulary lists are published as separate booklets, and are supposed to oblige at least government departments to use the listed words in their publications. The Academy, like its predecessor, also engages in language standardization. It has produced rules for spelling, tables of transliteration of Hebrew proper names and place names into the Latin alphabet, for the transliteration of foreign names into Hebrew characters and for the spelling of foreign words, as well as rules for punctuation, and a variety of decisions on grammar, including rules for the inflection of all noun patterns. In actual fact, the legal authority of the Academy is largely

illusory. Its rules for punctuation and for spelling unvocalized texts4 are ignored by the public, and not taught in the schools; the transliteration system was adopted for signs on interurban highways only after a long time and is still largely ignored in street names. The Academy's decisions on grammar are, at least officially, taught in the schools. The reason for this limited success is probably that the government has no machinery for forcing linguistic decisions upon the public, or upon the schools, and relies on the Academy to work for the acceptance of its own decisions. The Academy, however, is a scholarly body without inclination or ability to make propaganda or to persuade other bodies to carry out its decisions. The terminology decisions, on the other hand, enjoy great success. The public appears to believe that the Academy regulates everything in the language, and are interested in its vocabulary innovations and grammatical decisions, even though they are mostly ignorant of what has actually been decided, and often ascribe to the Academy decisions which are either different from the ones it made, or refer to matters the Academy has never dealt with. Yet, the terminology booklets have not much sale, and newspapers have proved to be unwilling to print word lists or to report on important innovations of the Academy. The most successful publication is a series of wall-sheets giving selected terms established for a certain occupation or science, accompanied by some grammatical and spelling rules, and lavishly illustrated, which are put up in schools, offices and workshops. The principal

success of the Academy, however, is the rapid acceptance of its professional and scientific terminology lists by the practitioners of those activities. Apart from the need of professions for a unified and clear terminology, this success also is due to the way in which those terminologies are discussed and established.

Terminology Work

Each terminology committee is composed of between one to three members of the Academy and a usually larger number of practitioners of the field in question. It is the latter who draw up a list of the terms required in the subject, in English and accompanied by Hebrew terms already employed in the profession. In the meetings, each term is ascertained as to its correctness in Hebrew, that is, its form and the meanings of the word in older literature. It is examined whether the same word is not used in some other list by a different profession in a sense different from that needed in the list under discussion.5 The professional members raise problems involved in the use of certain terms in their practice or in teaching. From time to time, partial word lists agreed by the committee are circulated to members of the Academy and to a large number of people in the profession. Criticism and alternative suggestions are received, discussed, and if accepted, incorporated in the list. The revised list is once more circulated among Academy members, and objectors are often invited to discuss their opinions with the committee.

The list, when complete, goes to a meeting of the Academy's Board of Terminology which discusses items where Academy members insist on their objections, but it happens that the Board raises objections of its own, which necessitate reconsideration by the committee. In the next stage, the list and the points of dissension are discussed by a joint meeting of the Terminology Board and the Grammar Board. At one time the list was in the last stage discussed once more in the plenary meeting of the Academy, but this proved too time-consuming, and now only items where no agreement could be reached are presented to the Plenum, who after a discussion in which the professional committee members participate, and eventually after returning the list to the committee for reconsideration, officially confirm the list by vote.

The future users of the terminology are thus involved at every stage of the discussion. The words have been seen by many members of the profession, and when the list is finally published, most of it has already become familiar. It has often happened that terms came into professional use immediately after the first circular, but were in the future discussion replaced by others, as a result of which two different terms became current acquiring different shades of meaning. Only recently the academy confirmed such a term which it had rejected, but this time in the changed usage given to it by the professionals.

Apart from the Academy, the Army has its own language commission, and so have the police, the customs, and some other governmental bodies. There is some degree of co-operation. We can estimate, however, that the words created by all official bodies make up only a small part of the word innovation, compared with journalists, publicity experts, novelists, poets, and scientists. The way of creating new words is however the same in each case, even if certain procedures may be used more by one group than by another.

Some Grammatical Mechanisms

The vast majority of Hebrew words contain a root, that is, a set of mostly three consonants, which is felt to have a meaning, though this meaning may be diversified by semantic shifts beyond recognition, or there may be roots homonymous from the outset, due to sound changes or to borrowing. All words also contain vowels, and some contain consonantal prefixes, infixes and suffixes. These, and especially the words or parts of words without the consonantal affixes, are called "patterns." Since the reconstructed Proto-Semitic language had three short vowels and three long ones, and since certain combinations were excluded, the number of such patterns is limited. The theory developed by Jewish medieval grammarians and modern philologists is that in the noun some or all of these patterns had meaning. Inspection of the Biblical nouns does not support this theory, neither does early Classical Arabic. Similar derivational meaning is in no way

prominent in nouns of the same pattern, moreover, many nouns are attested in several patterns without change of meaning. However, in late Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew, a few meaningful patterns turn up, probably due to borrowing from Assyro-Babylonian, e.g., $C_1aC_2C_2\hat{a}C_3$ for 'professions.' Also the meanings of consonantal affixes in Biblical Hebrew are rather vague. The theory that vowel patterns have meaning may have arisen through generalizing from participles and verbal nouns, where in many cases the function is marked by vowel patterns, for example, $C_1\hat{o}C_2\hat{e}C_3$ 'active participle,' $C_1\hat{a}C_2\hat{u}C_3$[6] 'passive participle,' $C_1\hat{a}C_2\hat{o}C_3$ 'infinitive.'Once accepted, it was a self-fulfilling prophecy: Large numbers of new nouns were created for meanings assumed to be those of the pattern, and old nouns and adjectives were sometimes reinterpreted to fit the theory. In Modern Hebrew this theory works like an automat: $C_1\hat{a}C_2\hat{o}C_3(C_3)$ 'having the color of X,' $C_1aC_2C_2eC_3et$ (with fem. suffix) 'a disease with symptom X,' also 'an assembly of Xes,' $maC_1C_2eC_3$ 'a tool for purpose X,' $miC_1C_2\hat{a}C_3\hat{a}h$ 'a place or building where X is attended to,' CaCCiC 'X-able,' etc. Such derivations are freely made by Hebrew speakers, and immediately understood. A similar mechanism exists in the verb: Vowel patterns, doubling and affixes create new verbs with added meanings, mainly of a syntactic character: past form CâCaC 'he did X,' 'passive' $niC_1C_2aC_3$; $hiC_1C_2\hat{i}C_3$ 'he caused someone to do X,' 'passive' $huC_1C_2aC_3$; hitCaCCêC 'reflexive or mutual action.' A further derivation, with doubling of the second root-letter, has no clear meaning in Modern Hebrew, and is used

as a general means of denominative derivation; in Biblical Hebrew it seems to have indicated repeated action, though the theory taught in schools is that it denotes intensive action, a claim notoriously difficult to prove, or for that matter, to disprove.

As we stated above, the number of pure vowel patterns, even including consonant doubling (which is not pronounced in contemporary Hebrew, except for /f/, /v/ and /kh/ which become /p/, /b/ and /k/, respectively, when doubled) is severely limited. Also the number of prefixes and suffixes inherited from older Hebrew is very small. Meanings are given in present-day word formation to certain suffixes, but they are so few that the same suffix has to represent multiple meanings, for instance, -ôn denotes dimunitive, a periodical appearing at X intervals, a printed collection of Xes, e.g., shir-ôn 'song-book', and a small building made of X, e.g., pax-ôn 'a hut made of corrugated iron sheets.'

As did many European languages, Modern Hebrew is borrowing suffixes from other languages, such as -ar (already in Mishnaic Hebrew) from Latin -arius, which came into English as -er; -âtsyah from Russian or Polish, cf. English -ation, originally Latin; -ist from some European language, originally Greek -istês (preserved in some Mishnaic Hebrew borrowings as -istôs); and from Russian -nik (written -niq, fem. -niqit) 'adherent of X,' 'marked by characteristic X;' -tshik (written -ciq) diminutive,

etc. It also happens that parts of words are separated as suffixes, the standard instance being -trôn as suffix marking different kinds of theatres, abstracted from teatron, borrowed into Mishnaic Hebrew from Greek théatron. Similar processes also exist in the verb. Mishnaic Hebrew has a few obviously derived verbs with prefix sh-, the mark of the causative verb in Assyro-Babylonian and some other Semitic languages. At the beginning of the revival this prefix was occasionally used in this meaning to differentiate one causative from another of the same root. One of the instances was shixzêr 'he reconstructed,' as opposed to normal Hebrew hexzîr 'he gave back,' 'he drove back.' The need to translate into Hebrew numerous verbs with the prefix re- caused this compound to be treated as a calque of re-construct (although xâzar does not mean 'to construct,' but 'to return'). Many re- verbs were translated in this way, which has become an additional verbal derivation, gradually ousting the older way of rendering re- verbs by adding after the verb the adverb mê-xâdâsh, 'anew.' No such possibilities were present for translating other verbal prefixes from European languages in the existing grammar, and the addition of adverbs is the only way they can be rendered.

Traditional Hebrew has a number of four-consonant roots, and these are handled in the verb by assimilating them to the above-mentioned "intensive" derivation $C_1iC_2C_2êC_3$, called Piel. The verbs with shi- prefix were already in Mishnaic Hebrew conjugated that way. In principle, a denominative verb can be derived from

any noun containing four or five consonants, whether these are a root or a form derived by affixes from a triconsonantal root. This provides us with further instances of the birth of new prefixes to verbs. Mishnaic Hebrew borrowed from Aramaic the formation of verbal nouns from the Piel derivation of the form taC$_1$C$_2$ûC$_3$. Such forms are now created for differentiation. From shâ'al 'to ask,' the verbal noun is she'êlâh, in the meaning 'to borrow' it is she'îlâh, and in the meaning of 'police interrogation' it is tish'ûl. From this specialized term a new verb, tish'êl, is derived, and now the ti- derivation is also sometimes used where no t- noun existed previously. Following the Aramaic form of the Hebrew hiC$_1$C$_2$îC$_3$ causative derivation, a form with i- instead of hi- is employed for differentiation, but conjugated like a quadriconsonantal root, for example, hizkîr 'he mentioned,' izkêr 'he referred to.'

European adjectives with Latin and Greek prefixes or vernacular equivalents are rendered in contemporary Hebrew by prefixing Hebrew prepositions and other words, sometimes Aramaic, for instance, al-, 'super-,' tat- 'sub-,' qedam- 'pre-,' bâtâr- 'post-.' This is an innovation in Hebrew, since older Hebrew, like Arabic until today, could prefix only negations. Not all prefixes of this kind can as yet be rendered by prefixes in Hebrew, but on the other hand Hebrew has prefixes of its own, e.g., kol- 'all-,' as in kol-artsi 'countrywide.' These prefixes can also be used in abstract nouns.

Traditional Hebrew did not allow nominal compounds, although medieval Jewish exegesis employed the concept of compounds of two roots in order to provide ideological or mystical explanations of Biblical words. Already Ben-Yehuda suggested compound nouns, such as sax-râxôq as calque for 'telephone,' where sax- is a minimum-vowel form of the root syx 'to talk,' plus raxoq 'far.' The word was not accepted, be it because of the novelty of its formation or because of its ugly sound. Today words of this kind are frequent, and their number increases constantly, using wherever possible minimum-vowel forms (the origin of which I have not yet discovered). Some examples to illustrate: from the root mdd 'to measure' mad-xôm 'thermometer' (later on mad 'meter' came to be used as an independent noun); shlat-râxôq 'remote control,' ramz-ôr 'traffic light,' (lit.: 'indicate(by)light'); qôl-nôac 'sound-film' (lit.: 'voice-move,' cf. cinema from Greek kine- 'to move,' and motion-picture). In some cases where elements at the end of the first word are the same as those at the beginning of the second, they appear only once, as in daxpôr 'bulldozer' (daxôf 'push' + x(a)fôr 'dig,' with /f/ becoming /p/ after a consonant); midrâxôv 'walking street' (midrâkhâh 'pavement' + rexôv 'street.'

Compound words that are not too long can serve as basis for denominative verbs. Thus from ramzôr 'traffic light' is formed the transitive verb rimzêr 'he installed traffic lights in...'

This incorporation of an Indo-European language process into a Semitic language is but one example of the influence of vocabulary extension upon a language. In a way, the influx of foreign words is less likely to disturb the balance in the growing process of a language than insistence on reproducing all new concepts by native language material. Purism, by stretching the capabilities of a language beyond that which is customary, may lead to imbalance and to the gradual establishment of a new balance. The answer to the question whether this constitutes progress or irreparable damage depends upon the view one holds of the nature of language.

Besides vocabulary extension, the adaptation of a language to a new or enlarged world of thought also brings with it an extension of syntax, new ways of expressing logical connections, of grading claims of the truth of assertions (hedging), and of assessing the truth or probability of assertions made by others. It is at present not possible to describe the innovations Westernization and modernization have introduced into written Hebrew. Not only do we lack synchronic descriptions of these matters in Hebrew texts, but even if we had them, we could only decide whether a given construction is an innovation if we had detailed syntactic descriptions of the Hebrew prose language of the centuries before the revival. However, the language of Hebrew non-literary prose of the Middle Ages and of the early modern period has largely remained outside the field of research, except

for vocabulary.7 Since the innovations are likely to concern discourse analysis as much as sentence syntax, existing partial research may be of little use. Certain studies have shown that minor syntactic phenomena of contemporary written, or even colloquial, Hebrew appear already in medieval and early modern texts, and it is quite likely that we shall find the same also for the features mentioned above.

It seems to me that languages which have at previous times in their history gone through a process of adapting themselves to another, wider culture, are more likely to be successful in adapting themselves today to Western technical civilization. This may well be worth exploring.

Notes

1. On the implications of Ben-Yehuda's article see Silberschlag (1981) and Mandel's article in that volume; cf. also Rabin 1983.

2. These words were first listed in Krauss (1899), however, since Krauss' time many more borrowings have been identified.

3.For this view of Mendele's type of Hebrew see Rabin (1985). The generally accepted view is that he "synthesized" Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew; cf. the standard work by Kutscher (1982: 190).

4.Cf. Rabin (1977) and Weinberg 1985. The Hebrew alphabet consists of consonants only. The letters <h>, <w>, and <y> also represent vowels in a vague and inconsistent manner. There is a set of signs above and below the letters which provide complete vowel representation, but is used only for the Bible, prayer books, poetry, books for children, and for the needs of language learners. The spelling reform of 1968 merely standardized and somewhat amplified the use of <w> and <y> for vowels.

5. The Academy has now almost completed a computerized index of all of its vocabulary decisions.

6. Here C_1, C_2, etc. represent consonants, whichever they are, while the vowels are to be read as such. The distinction between short and long (¯) vowels corresponds to the orthography of the vowel system (cf. note 4) and is of grammatical importance, but there is no such differentiation in speech.

7. This highly productive and adaptable état de langue was described by an outstanding Hebraist and Semitist, Gotthelf Bergsträsser (1886-1933) in the following way: Mittelalterliches Hebräisch gehört zu den verwahrlosesten Sprachen [medieval Hebrew is one of the most degenerated languages] (1928: 47). The reason for this judgment was probably that its grammar and syntax lacked standardization, and anyway were neither according to Biblical Hebrew nor to Mishnaic Hebrew.

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